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SUBJECT: TUAREG REBEL LEADER AG GHALI ASSIGNED TO SAUDI ARABIA

REF: BAMAKO 00587

Classified By: Political Officer Aaron Sampson, Embassy Bamako, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1.(C) The Malian government recently announced the appointment of Iyad ag Ghali, the renowned Malian Tuareg rebel leader and president of the Alliance for Democracy and Change (ADC), to a post as advisor to the Malian Consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Ag Ghali openly desired to withdraw from his role as northern Mali's main power broker, and had asked President Toure for an assignment to either Saudi Arabia or Egypt earlier this year (reftel).

2.(C) It is not unusual for the Malian government to assign current or former Tuareg and Arab rebel leaders to Malian Embassies abroad in accordance with the terms of the 1992 National Pact between the Malian government and various northern rebel groups. Notable rebel leaders serving in either the current government or posts abroad include:

-- Abdourahmane Galla, former Secretary General of the Revolutionary Army for the Liberation of Azawad (ARLA), assigned to the Malian Embassy in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Recently re-assigned as the Malian Consul to Tamanrasset, Algeria.

-- Zahabi Ould Sidi Mohamed, former Assistant Secretary General of the Arab Islamic Front of the Azawad (FIAA) and leader of the Movement and Unified Front for Azawad (MFUA), has been working for UNDP since the late 1990s. Although this is not a Malian government post, former Malian President Alpha Oumar Konare likely helped identify a UN position for Sidi Mohamed who signed the final peace agreement on behalf of all northern rebel factions.

-- Mohamed ag Bilal, ARLA member, formerly assigned to Malian Embassy in Abidjan, now working for Malian government in Bamako.

-- Boubacar Sadeck Ould Mohamoud, former FIAA Secretary General, currently assigned to Malian Consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

-- Zeidan ag Sidalamine, former Secretary General of the Popular Front for the Liberation of the Azawad (FPLA), currently assigned to the Malian Embassy in China.

-- Abdallah ag Hama, former FPLA leader, currently assigned to the Malian Embassy in Egypt.

-- Commandant Abdoulaye Maiga, former leader of the Gandakoy

movement, formerly assigned as Defense Attache to the Malian Embassy in China. Now serving in the Malian military in Mali.

-- Aghatam ag Alhassane, former FPLA leader, named Minister of Environment in September 2007.

-- Mohamed el Moctar, former FIAA leader, named Minister of Culture in September 2007.

3.(C) Ag Ghali's departure will create an enormous vacuum within the ADC. On November 28 ag Ghali told the Embassy that the ADC would remain "on standby" while he was in Saudi Arabia but that National Assembly Deputy and ADC spokesman Ahmada ag Bibi would manage the ADC in the meantime. Ag Ghali was vague about the timing of his departure and hinted that he may stay in Mali until the on-going hostage crisis with Ibrahim Bahanga is resolved.
McCulley